

## **Mota's Ashes: Requiem for a Legionary**

by Mike Rienzi

**"We all of us have the most formidable dynamite, the most advanced weapon of war, more powerful than tanks and machine guns: it is our own ashes!"**

- Ion Mota, 1935

Who was Ion Mota, described by Roger Griffin as "a fanatical anti-Semite" (1), and why is he and his life important for pro-Western activism? Mota was the "right-hand man" of Corneliu Codreanu, founder and leader of the Romanian Legion of the Archangel Michael, also known as the Iron Guard (2,3). An understanding of the Legionary movement is essential for an understanding of who Mota was as a historical figure, and why he was and is important. Thus, this essay will be not only about Ion Mota, but about Codreanu and the Legionary movement as well.

The seeds of the Legionary Movement were sown in the so-called Student Movement of 1922 (2). Unlike most modern-day American and European university students, a large number of the Romanian students of that day were nationalist and strongly anti-communist. Romanian students were in ferment not only because of the Bolshevik threat and the increasing Marxist propaganda, but also because of a more proximal problem: the domination of Romanian academia by Jews. As Sima tells us (2), in the Faculty of Medicine in Iassy there were 832 Jewish students vs. 556 Romanian students, while Jews as a group made up only a small percentage of Romania's population. Jews were over-represented in the business and the professions as well, and could well afford to send their children to the best institutions, while the mass of the Romanian peasantry had no such options. The sympathy of these educated and wealthy Jews to Soviet Marxism (as demonstrated by Jacob Schiff and others, being wealthy was no barrier for Jewish participation in "anti-capitalist" Marxism) was another source of irritation for the students. These tensions boiled over and became fixed into the student's demand for a "Numerus Clauses"; that is, a quota system in which the percentage of Jews admitted to Romanian universities would be directly proportional to their percentage of the population of Romania. Student demonstrations and a student "strike" ensued, as the pro-Jewish government refused to consider the students' demands. However, by late summer 1923 it was apparent that the will of the students to continue this resistance was dwindling. Many wanted to get on with their studies, and their careers. Corneliu Codreanu, already a figure in Romanian nationalist politics and also heavily involved in the fight for the Numerus Clauses, met with Ion Mota, then the President of the Student Centre of the University of Cluj, to try and find a solution to this crisis.

Mota proposed a radical solution, one entirely consistent with the path he would take throughout the rest of his life. Mota suggested that the strike end, and the mass of the students be allowed to continue with their lives; the fight for the Numerus Clauses was a failure. However, Mota further suggested that the elite of the Student Movement "punish" those deemed responsible for this state of affairs: Mota proposed the assassination of some Liberal party ministers and Jewish bankers. Plans were drawn up, but the conspiracy failed when one student, named Vernichesco, defected and informed to the authorities (2).

The whole incident made a profound impression on the entire nation. The establishment was quite concerned about the existence of such radical hardness and self-sacrificing commitment in the students, who were thought to lack these character traits. Demonstrations and strikes were one thing, but the killing of ministers and of prominent members of Romanian Jewry was quite another. As Sima (2) described the problem:

**"What does alarm the government is the firmness of decision of these young people, the clarity of their convictions, their belief in their cause. A new type of character had arisen: men with an integral vision of the nationalist struggle and ones ready to give their lives for the victory of the Ideal. It was something new in the history of Romania."**

The student radicals were put on trial on March 29, 1924. While awaiting trial in prison Mota once again showed a consistency and hardness of character by obtaining a gun and seriously wounding the informer Vernichesco. While this action was counterproductive (obviously) from the standpoint of the trial itself, Mota felt that to allow Vernichesco's treason to go unanswered was worse than whatever consequences Mota's actions could bring (2). According to Sima (2), public opinion started to go in the direction of the students; without direct and hard evidence against them, they were acquitted, demonstrating a hidden reservoir of support for Romanian nationalism amongst the people and elements of the judiciary.

Romanian nationalism struggled on for several years, with Codreanu and associates attempting an ultimately unsuccessful alliance with the "anti-Semitic" nationalist professor Cuza. Finally Codreanu decided to go his own way. Inspired by a beautiful icon of the Archangel Michael, Codreanu resolved to found a new organization, based on an entirely new set of principles (2). The date was June 24, 1927. Codreanu wrote:

**"Order of the day', item number 1:**

**Today, Friday, June 24 1927 (Feast of St. John the Baptist) at 10:00pm the Legion of Saint Michael the Archangel is founded under my leadership. Whosoever comes into its ranks let him believe totally. Whosoever stays without, let him have doubts.**  
**I appoint Radu Mironovici as the Guardian of the Icon."**

Thus it began. With zero money, with zero resources, with nothing but the name of Codreanu and the resolve of he and his small band of fellows - including his good friend Ion Mota - a new nationalist organization was founded, one which would ultimately shake Romania to its very foundations.

The Legion was unique. Rather than emphasize winning elections, making compromises, or seizing power in some sort of "coup," Codreanu ultimately stressed internal, rather than external, achievements. The aim of the Legion was to create the "New Man", to alter the internal character of the individual, to create an elite of a dedicated, spiritually committed, self-sacrificing cadre, a cadre capable of leading the Romanian people out of what Codreanu considered their "bondage" to Jewish and other anti-nationalist interests, and into an era of national greatness. The Legion was based on a strong belief in Christianity (thus demonstrating that sincere Christian belief can be compatible with hard-core nationalism), hierarchical in nature, with an emphasis on character-building, personal responsibility, love of nation, and a connection with all Romanians - those

presently alive, those who have lived and died before, and those yet to be born (2). The Legion was almost like a revolutionary monastic movement, more like a priesthood than an army, more spiritual than crassly materialistic.

But Codreanu knew he had to implement his ideals in the world of material reality. Organizing his growing group of followers into "nests", he put forth the value of constructive practical work, rather than empty talk, to win the hearts and minds of the people. Singing and marching, Legionaries would enter Romanian towns and help the peasants with their chores. They started journals, recruited leading intellectuals, and built, with their own hands, the "Green House" (Casa Verde), a place of refuge for persecuted Legionaries, and later Legionary headquarters. And indeed, they were persecuted by the government with a ruthless, illegal savagery, for the government saw in the Legion a direct challenge to its own authority over the masses of the Romanian people. To leave the Legion unscathed would eventually mean power for the Legion, especially after, once having grown immensely, the Legionary movement started getting involved in politics as the "end game" to implement its vision of a renewed nationalist Romania. That the King of Romania, involved with a Jewish mistress, was hostile to the Legion was another deadly card the anti-Legionary forces had in their deck (2).

The Legion was banned again and again. Legionaries were arrested, beaten, and killed by the forces of a corrupt government. When the Legionaries organized a propaganda squad called the "Death Team" - so named because of the willingness of its members to die for the cause - the government stated that it was a "death squad", and arrested its members. In 1933 the government of I.G. Duca tried all methods - including brutal terror - to crush the Legion. Duca was assassinated by three young Legionaries in response, which led to even more vicious repression of the nationalist Legionary youth (2).

Meanwhile, Ion Mota was becoming prominent within this increasingly popular (and persecuted) movement, and was becoming heavily involved not only in the Legion's domestic affairs, but in foreign affairs as well (2). On December 16-17, 1934, a unique conference took place in Montreux, organized by General Eugenio Coselschi of the *Action Committees for Roman Universality*, a pan-Fascist organization. This "Montreux Conference" was the first serious attempt to organize European nationalist groups into a cooperative movement, and many groups - ranging from fledgling parties to those who had already achieved power (e.g., the Italian Fascists) - were represented. Conspicuous by their absence was the new National Socialist government of Germany. Already committed to a plan of hegemony through military conquest, Hitler had no time for voluntary cooperation with other nationalists, groups which might in the future be opponents of German expansionism. This absence proved to be the ultimate undoing of the pan-European front of the 1930's, as Mussolini's increasing attachment to, and dependence on, Adolf Hitler resulted in Italy's abandonment of the concepts embodied at Montreux. That this ultimately proved disastrous to Euro-nationalism is plainly evident by the events which followed. But, at the time, the future for nationalist cooperation seemed bright, Germany's intransigence notwithstanding.

Codreanu chose Ion Mota as the Legion's representative at this conference. Besides being Codreanu's confidant, Mota had particular qualifications in the field of international relations. On December 15, 1929 Mota had spoken to the Student Centre of Bucharest, the topic being: "The

League of Nations - Its Ideal, Its Weaknesses and Its Dangers." His thesis, finished in 1932 at the University of Grenoble was entitled: "Juridical Security in the Community of Nations." Both Mota's 1929 speech and his 1932 thesis revolved around his views of foreign relations.

According to Mota (2), although such relations are apparently set by "international law", there is in fact no such thing as "juridical security", because there were no set of laws accepted as valid by all nations. Thus, foreign relations were not conducted on the basis of legal abstraction, but on the basis of the prevailing political realities. In Mota's view, the resolution of problems between nations is not arrived at in a structured way via the application of abstract legal decisions, but instead result in a more haphazard manner depending on the realities of political power: *realpolitick* trumps idealism (2). While not popular among the leftist professors of his day, Mota's practical viewpoint was of course the truth; in time the League of Nations founded and collapsed, and the so-called United Nations, founded by the military might of the victorious "Allies" of World War II, settles issues in a manner that is a far cry from true international justice. In our present day, what is considered "right" and "just" seems to be whatever is in the interests of the ruling globalist elites, the American political class, and, of course, international Zionism. Thus, Mota's views on international relations, like so much else he wrote, is of great validity today.

Mota at the Montreux conference focused on the problems of building a true international coalition of nationalist Euro-derived groups; a "Fascist International", as it were. How to avoid destructive conflicts? How to avoid disruption of unity, and preserve a common front? How to balance the rights of national and ethnoracial sovereignty against all these concerns? What about the Jewish Question? Mota spoke, and the delegates listened. Some of his major points (2):

**"The problem at hand, that of building a new unity, especially concerns me. It is going to be necessary to do the impossible so that the fascist world of tomorrow is not divided into several blocs fighting one another. The problem of the Universality of Rome must concern us first of all. We must push ourselves to mutual common ground upon which we will be able to proceed tomorrow.**

**As the Congress President has already said, we can hope for one thing: that the fascist world of tomorrow forms a whole, from every point of view. We must not set ourselves too grandiose objectives, but we must recognize that each people has the right to settle its own particular problems, into which no one has the right to intrude. However, from another perspective, it is quite right that, on great international questions, we should remain united so as not to compromise the fascist unity of tomorrow."**

Mota later introduced two questions which needed to be addressed in order to promote the unity of which he spoke. Here Mota introduces the Jewish question:

**"One is the actual existence of several bodies studying problems common to nationalist movements (4). These centres of study and activity would have to agree amongst themselves at the first opportunity. Furthermore, they would have to be invited to take part in future meetings of the Committees.**

**The second question concerns one of the main factors in the building of a unique, European and world bloc. This factor is that no major international problem must be ignored or left**

**aside. And, amongst these problems there is the Jewish Question, which is very serious for some countries and especially so for Romania."**

This latter topic was not on the agenda for this meeting; however, after Mota's comments, the topic was discussed, and a resolution was decided upon, unanimously, as follows:

**"The Congress, seeing that each State, in virtue of the principle of national sovereignty, is alone qualified to decide, over its own territory, the attitude that it must take towards the citizens, groups, races and religions within its borders and, taking into account both natural law and morality, declares that the Jewish Question must not be seen as a campaign of hatred against Jewry.**

**However, seeing that, in a great many countries, certain Jewish groups exercise, whether openly or covertly, a harmful influence on the moral and material interests of the Nation, and form a kind of State within a State, claiming all sorts of rights but refusing to comply with all the commensurate duties, and working for the destruction of Christian civilization, the Congress denounces the sinister activity of such elements and is prepared to combat them (5)"**

Thus, we can see an honest attempt made to balance the needs of the whole with the needs of the part. As is common in pan-European activism, the sensitivities of sovereign peoples are fully respected, while the need for unity against the enemies of the West is stressed. This can be a winning formula for activists today, if they would only learn to overcome petty and divisive animosities and narrow hatreds.

An "amusing" sideshow to this conference was the continuing harassment of the Legionary movement by the ostensibly Romanian government. The foreign minister of Romania, Nicolae Titulesco, was staying at the same hotel as the Montreux conference delegates. Titulesco, citing a "warning of an attack against the Romanian minister", had the Swiss police search Mota's room for weapons. Of course, none were found. Subsequently, Mota wrote a strongly-worded letter of protest to Titulesco, who then appeared at the conference, shedding "crocodile tears" over Mota's treatment in "free, civilized Switzerland (2)." Mota replied to this nonsense by rejecting Titulesco's attempt to save face, and spoke eloquently about Romanian government persecution. Mota ended by asking the conference delegates to "observe a minute of silence" for the victims of this persecution; the Romanian minister was forced to slink away from the standing, silent nationalist cadres (2).

On April 17-19, 1935, the "Annual Conference of Students" took place in Craiova, Romania. This meeting of university students had an unmistakable pro-Legionary cast; thus, we see that nearly a decade and a half after the initial student activism, Romanian universities remained hotbeds of nationalist activism - a far cry indeed from the leftist domination of academic life in modern "western" society. Reflecting this pro-Legionary attitude, the honorary president of this conference was Ion Mota, who had the following words to impart to the latest generation of Romanian youth (2,6):

**"It is not enough to reassert the ideals of the students; a student conference cannot be reduced to a mere show of ideology; a conference must be an occasion to study the interior**

capacity of students to achieve their ends. It is pointless to talk of ideals if, at the same time, one does look to the means by which these ideals will be achieved.

What is the capacity for sacrifice of the youth united at this conference? It is only by a fusion of the student's personal life with his ideal that the latter's achievement can be assured.

*The essential thing is the spirit of sacrifice.*

We all of us have the most formidable dynamite, the most advanced weapon of war, more powerful than tanks and machine guns: it is our own ashes! Every power in the world is destined to collapse, whilst it remains with the ashes of brave fighters, fallen for Justice and for God."

This eloquently summarizes the difference between a real movement and a mere organization; Mota urges the students to make their ideals part and parcel of their personal lives, to live and breath their ideals, and, if necessary, to die for them.

Mota was always interested in keeping the spirit of the 1922 student movement alive. When, in the mid-1930's, anti-Legionary forces attempted, through indirect means, to subvert the nationalist student heritage via the formation of a "Student Bloc of 1922", Codreanu and Mota countered by forming "The 1922 Generation Student Movement Association", with Mota being chosen as its President (2). Mota argued that the spirit of 1922 was for all students who believed in it, not just those specifically from the "1922 generation", and via this successful argument Mota prevented splintering of the student activists along the artificial lines that the forces behind the "Student Bloc of 1922" desired. Thus, a scheme by the government to hijack the ideals of the 1922 student revolt was thwarted, and the ideals of the Legionary Movement were promoted further with much success.

Mota believed in letting his actions speak more eloquently than words. Thus, when a force of seven Romanian Legionary "commanders" was organized to fight in Spain on the side of the anti-communist nationalists, Mota (by now Codreanu's brother-in-law) signed up enthusiastically (2,7). Mota seemed to predict his ultimate fate. On December 3, 1936, shortly before his death, he wrote a letter, of which the following is the end (8):

**"This is why I too have now taken leave of my nearest and dearest, why I will no longer be with you physically, beloved comrades and readers of *Libertate*. But as the song puts it so eloquently:**

*'Those who have been cut down by the enemy's bullets*

*March in the ranks of those who remain'*

**As the Legionaries know full well, when they are mustered at the front for the 'roll call of the dead', and the names of those killed in battle are called out, all the Legionaries reply, loudly and with conviction, in place of whoever no longer has a voice: PRESENT!"**

On January 13, 1937 Ion Mota and Vasile Marin were killed at the front at Majadahonda (near the Spanish capitol of Madrid). On February 12, 1937, the Legionary elite took the "Oath of Ranking Legionaries" in the church of Saint Gorgani, in the presence of the bodies of both Mota and Marin. Here Codreanu said (2):

**"That is why you are going to swear that you understand that being a Legionary elite in our terms means not only to fight and win, but it also means above all a permanent sacrifice of oneself to the service of the Nation; that the idea of an elite is tied to the ideas of sacrifice, poverty, and a hard, bitter life; that where self-sacrifice ends, there also ends the Legionary elite."**

The presence of the dead martyrs Mota and Marin served to underscore these points. Codreanu recognized what Mota did; the most powerful weapon of the Legionary movement were the "ashes" of its followers, in other words their willingness to stand firm and die for their beliefs if necessary. The next day Mota and Marin were buried in the Green House. The funeral procession was described as "several kilometers long", attended by "several hundred thousand people (2)." Such was the esteem that Mota and Marin were held by the Romanian people (9).

Following Mota's death, the popularity of the Legionary Movement continued, as did plans by the government to crush it. By the spring of 1938 Codreanu was in jail on the basis of a "lawsuit for insult and injury" by one Professor Nicolae Iorga. An immense persecution of the Legionary Movement, spear-headed by the corrupt King Carol, his Jewish paramour, and the minister Calinescu ensued. Many Legionaries were thrown into concentration camps, a preview of their further persecution under the post-war communist regime. On November 30, 1938 Codreanu and other leading Legionaries are murdered by the police in a forest outside Bucharest, and many of the free Legionaries fled into exile. By 1940, however, the Legionaries are invited to participate in a new government set up by the pro-Hitler military strongman General Antonescu. However, Antonescu and the head-strong Legion eventually become enemies, with the ambitious Antonescu attempting to force the Legionaries from power. From January 21-23, 1941 the Legionaries were in conflict with the government, with armed conflict taking place the latter two days. The Germans, eager to have Antonescu's Romania as an ally against the USSR in the planned "Operation Barbarossa", helped to crush Legionary resistance. Thus ended the Legionaries as an organized force in Romania, although some later engaged in warfare against the post-war communist regime, with many suffering martyrdom in that regime's prison camps, as described in Bacu's haunting book, "The Anti-Humans."

In recent years however, the Legionary spirit and ideal has caught the imagination of many nationalists in Europe and America, proving that the sacrifices of Codreanu, Mota, and the other Legionaries were not in vain. A new generation of activists look toward these heroes for inspiration for the future.

Thus: the Legionary Movement. A vehicle for a higher, more spiritual form of nationalist activism, a model which may hold more promise for success than the failed strategies of the previous three-four decades. Thus: Ion Mota. A man of ideas, of man of action, a man of principle, a man who - like Codreanu himself- can be viewed as the prototype of first step towards the development of "The New Man" of the Legionary movement. Mota's persona, his spirit of sacrifice, his balance between nationalist patriotism and pan-Europeanism, his words and his actions, should serve as a model for today's sincere pro-Western activist. Mota has shown that indeed, his ashes are a powerful weapon, and when nationalists congregate and read out the roll call of comrades, the name Ion Mota should be read as well: **Ion Mota, PRESENT!**

## **Footnotes:**

1. In his book, "Fascism." (Oxford University Press, 1995). It would seem that Roger Griffin meant that description to be viewed in negative terms. However, as becomes clear after reading Dr. Kevin MacDonald's trilogy on the Jews and Jewish-Gentile relations throughout history, the term "anti-Semite" is often reserved for those Gentiles who promote the interests of the own ingroup, in competition to the Jewish group. Thus, non-Jews defending their legitimate ethnoracial rights and interests are "haters", while for Jews to do so is "good." We must eschew such irrational and emotion-laden labels for pro-Western activists, past, present, and future.
2. The primary sources of information for this article are: The History of the Legionary Movement, by Horia Sima, Legionary Press, 1995; and the article: "The Legionary Movement in Romania", in the Journal of Historical Review (online at: [http://64.143.9.197/jhr/v07/v07p193\\_Ronnett.html](http://64.143.9.197/jhr/v07/v07p193_Ronnett.html)).
3. The Legionary movement is better known by the name the "Iron Guard." Initially, the Iron Guard was meant by Codreanu to be an umbrella organization for various Romanian nationalist groups; however, since only the Legion took it seriously, the Iron Guard and the Legion became essentially one and the same.
4. This is, nearly 70 years later, an excellent idea, and one which needs be seriously considered. One of the advantages of pan-European activism is the gains accrued from the pooling of resources, ideas, and the cooperation of intelligent activists with varied perspectives. Nationalist "think tanks" can be of great benefit for advancing the cause of Euro-Western biocultural preservationism.
5. This resolution, besides its summary of the negative effects of organized anti-national Jewish interests on the West, also is indicative of the true nature of pan-Europeanism: cooperation and an overall unity, but within the framework of national and ethnic sovereignty, and within the framework of letting all peoples decide their internal problems as they best see fit.
6. This message, entitled "The Essential", was later published in the student journal Cuvantul Stuentesc (the Student Word).
7. The others were: Vasile Marin, Gheorghe Clime, Neculai Totu, Alexandru Cantacuzino, Banica Dobre, and Father Ion Dumitrescu-Borsa (2).
8. Testamento di Ion Motza (All' Insegna del Veltro): Genoa 1984, 40-1, 1st ed. 1937.
9. The song "Imnul Mota-Marin" (Hymn of Mota and Marin) was composed for these fallen heroes, written by Radu Gyr and lyrics by Ion Manzatu. See: <http://www.misarea.net/111-ab17.swf>